

What We Mean by Greenways

Greenways are connections between people and places, both cooperative agreements among neighboring communities and paths where the natural and human landscapes coincide.

Greenways are most often identified with trails or open space corridors. Trails are certainly Greenways, but so are sidewalk systems along tree-lined main streets, country roads through farmlands, safe and pleasant bike routes, and waterways with access points for fishing and floating small boats. Even a highway commercial district can be part of a Greenway, if it is built as a tree-lined boulevard rather than a linear strip of parking lots and pole signs.

In many ways we have always been a Greenway place. Dutchess County began as a network of trails through the wilderness. For centuries the Hudson River and other major waterways served as the regional routes for transportation and economic activities. From the early 1800s on, open farmland dominated the landscape. City neighborhoods, villages, and hamlets were closely centered around convenient walking distances. Early 20th century post cards show village center streets and country roads from Red Hook to Pawling shaded with overarching trees.

Design principles that emphasize trail connections, waterway access, farmland protection, tree-lined streets, and compact walkable centers are based on traditional settlement patterns embedded in the area's history and landscape.

Greenway policies place value on historic patterns distinctive to this region, but they also serve as a guide to integrating natural and rural landscapes with new development. Thinking about the future in the Greenway context encourages us to consider common problems and possible connections in regional terms. In this sense, cooperative agreements among communities are also forms of Greenway connections.



The Greenway Compact Program

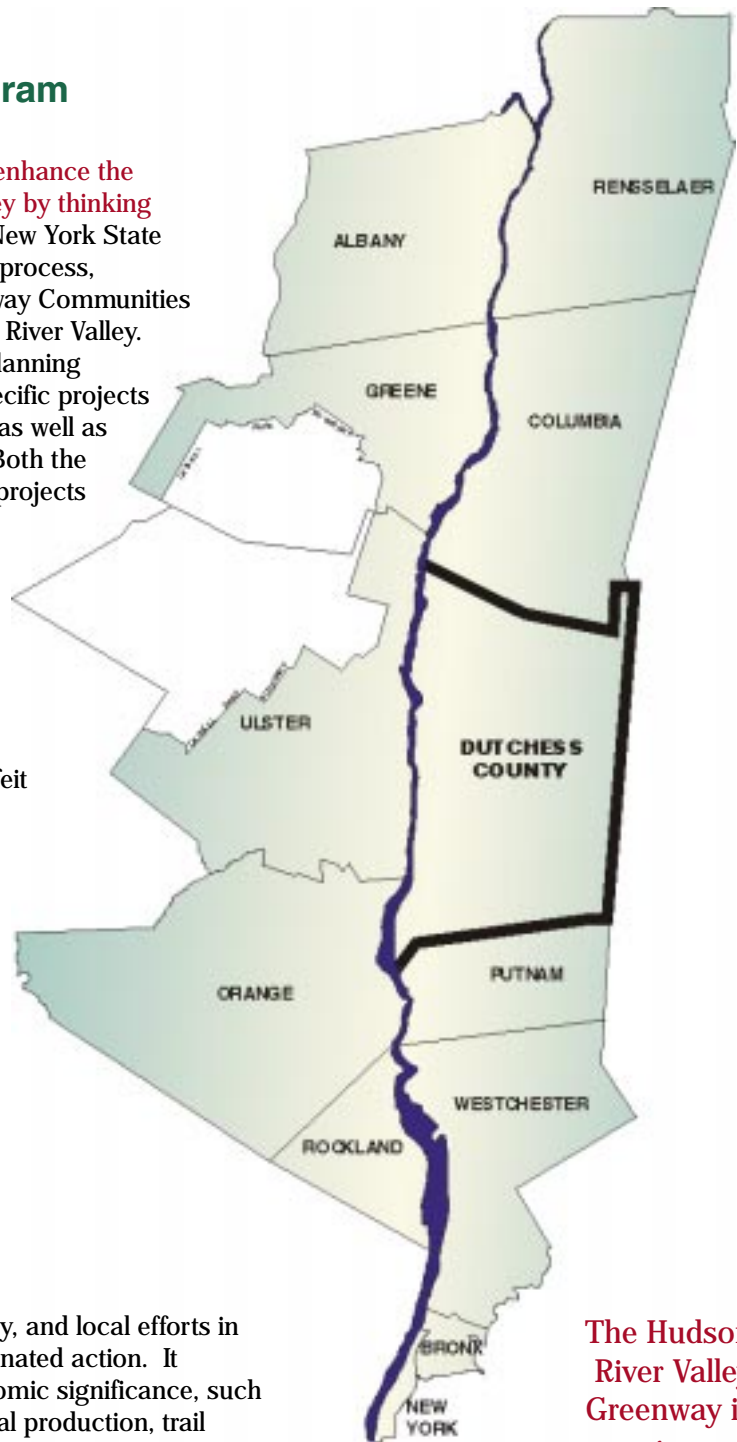
The Hudson River Valley Greenway is designed to enhance the character and economy of the Hudson River Valley by thinking regionally and acting locally. Authorized by the New York State Legislature in 1991 after an intensive valley-wide public process, Greenway programs are jointly organized by the Greenway Communities Council and the Greenway Conservancy for the Hudson River Valley. The Council works directly with communities on local planning projects, while the Conservancy helps to implement specific projects that are linked by the Hudson River Valley Trail system, as well as agricultural initiatives and a regional tourism strategy. Both the Council and Conservancy provide grants for Greenway projects and neither has any regulatory authority.

Joining the Greenway is voluntary. Communities can join the Greenway individually (29 of 30 Dutchess County municipalities have already agreed to this initial level of participation) or as part of a broader countywide Compact Program that offers additional incentives and the benefits of intermunicipal coordination. Municipalities choosing to participate do not forfeit any of their local decision-making powers.

Contents of the compact agreements are locally determined, but the Greenway legislation identifies five primary goals:

1. Natural and cultural resource protection;
2. Economic development, including tourism, agriculture and urban redevelopment;
3. Public access;
4. Regional planning; and
5. Heritage and environmental education

The Greenway Compact Program organizes state, county, and local efforts in an ongoing commitment toward cooperation and coordinated action. It encourages certain types of projects with regional economic significance, such as Main Street and waterfront redevelopment, agricultural production, trail connections, scenic road improvements, and other specific activities, as well as providing policies and guidelines to help each community carry out Greenway goals. Two important objectives specifically listed in the Greenway legislation are identifying developments of regional impact and areas of regional concern, such as necessary public facilities and infrastructure. The Greenway Compact is meant to promote a regional vision, yet still offer practical advice to help make the critical choices we have to make every day.



The Hudson River Valley Greenway is a program of voluntary regional cooperation for 13 counties bordering the Hudson River, including all of Dutchess County.

Joining the Compact

The Greenway Compact Program is a voluntary partnership between the Greenway Council and local communities to work toward Greenway goals, help build a network of connecting routes, and use the Greenway guides to improve their local and regional surroundings.



To join the Compact and receive Greenway benefits, communities need not make sweeping revisions to their plans and codes. Municipalities can approve a local law with three basic provisions:

1. Adopt the Greenway Compact Program, agreeing to work with neighboring communities and other Compact members to implement projects that are compatible with the goals and policies outlined in *Greenway Connections*;
2. Amend local zoning and subdivision regulations with a short cross-reference, stating that subsequent planning review interpretations and discretionary actions will be guided by *Greenway Connections*; and
3. Agree that, whenever appropriate, any new or amended land use regulations will be consistent with the Greenway Compact Program.

Communities should also appoint a Greenway contact person or committee to coordinate Greenway activities and act as a liaison to other Greenway Compact members. As additional guidelines become available or amendments are considered to *Greenway Connections*, communities can accept or reject the proposed changes. The flexibility and hands-on nature of local decision making is thereby protected, yet strengthened with the mutual support of nearby and regional neighbors. Again, the program is entirely voluntary, sustained by continued cooperation and a record of successful projects and improvements, not by any new requirements. A draft Compact local law is included in the appendix.

Local Greenway Incentives

By adopting Greenway Compact agreements, communities become eligible for an additional list of incentives granted in the Hudson River Valley Greenway Act of 1991:

